

Chief Blair apologizes to G20 protester at centre of YouTube video

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Adam Nobody, centre, is flanked by his lawyers Julian Falconer and Sunil Mathai at a news conference in Toronto on Friday. A YouTube video showing Nobody being assaulted is shown in the background.

RICK EGLINTON/TORONTO STAR

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Toronto G20 Summit»

Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair has issued a public apology to Adam Nobody, the G20 protester at the centre of a YouTube video that ignited controversy earlier this week.

Blair, who suggested Monday that Nobody was armed and violent, conceded there was no evidence that the 27-year-old was either at the time of his arrest.

In the same radio interview, Blair lashed out at the province's Special Investigations Unit, accusing the police watchdog of "guesswork and speculation" in its conclusion that excessive force was probably used in two cases during G20 protests, although it decided not to pursue charges against police.

Blair said the [YouTube video](#) cited by the SIU as evidence of excessive police force, was "tampered with" and edited out of context.

Shot by web developer John Bridge, the video shows Nobody chased by about six uniformed officers and then tackled.

“It is very likely that what has been removed sheds light on why the man was arrested, and why force was used,” Blair said Monday.

Charges were withdrawn in October against Nobody, who suffered a broken cheekbone and nose.

“In an effort to demonstrate the potential significance of the missing audio and video, I said police were attempting to arrest an armed criminal and that the missing video images might have shed light on the reasons force was used,” said Blair in a statement released Friday.

“This statement created a false impression that I wish to clarify. I have no evidence that he was armed or violent and all charges against the injured man have been withdrawn. I regret the false impression that my comments may have created and apologize to Mr. Nobody.”

Speaking along with his lawyers Friday, Nobody acknowledged Blair's apology, saying “It is very important to me that I have been apologized to.” He added that it has been a difficult week for him and that “being called a violent offender really hit home.” “Now that he's apologized is he going to look for the people who did this?” added Nobody.

In an affidavit, Bridge said he turned his camera off briefly because he saw police rushing toward him, then turned it back on when he realized they weren't coming for him.

The *Star* obtained a copy of the original video. The time code indicates a pause of four seconds between the two clips.

“Police really only had the time to bring Adam to the ground,” said Bridge of the gap, adding there was no resistance or violence on the part of Nobody.

On Friday, Bridge said he was relieved by Blair's comments and that he felt as though they have restored both his and Nobody's credibility. He added that he was pleased to hear the SIU is reopening the case and said that he “feels as though an outcome could come out of this.”

Firing back at Blair's comments, Ian Scott, director of SIU, announced Tuesday he would reopen his investigation into injuries suffered by Nobody.

“I will be asking Chief Blair to provide the SIU with any further relevant information he has with respect to this incident and more specifically any forensic evidence in his possession regarding the allegation of tampering with the videotape,” Scott said.

Lawyer Julian Falconer, who has two years to bring a civil suit on behalf of his client, said Blair's apology was "classy" and "an important step in ensuring some justice in a situation that spiralled out of control."

But he also called on the chief to order all the men and women under him to come forward with information about the identity of the officers in the video.

"There is the right to remain silent. But there is no right to remain hidden," said Falconer.

It is a call echoed by former SIU head Howard Morton earlier this week when he said, "For Bill Blair to not fully cooperate and order every officer in his command who has some knowledge of who these officers are is a disgrace."

When asked whether Blair has sent out any directives or messages telling his officers to cooperate, police spokesperson Mark Pugash said police officers have "an absolutely clear understanding of what's expected of them . . . and we have a track record of holding our people accountable."

In his statement today, Blair said, "Police officers will be held accountable where there is evidence of misconduct," adding there is full cooperation with the investigations of the SIU, the Office of the Independent Police Review Director, and the Toronto Police Services Board.

"It had been my intent to ensure all of the facts are available to the many G20 investigations and reviews currently underway," he said.

"Unfortunately, my remarks achieved the exact opposite and I deeply regret any confusion my comments may have created."

Nobody alleges he was taken behind a paddy wagon by two plain clothes officers and kicked repeatedly in the head. He said one officer was calling him a "piece of s---."

"Get up and fight me," he recalled the officer saying, adding there were "tons of police officers around laughing."

During the first investigation, Scott concluded there was not enough evidence to corroborate Nobody's allegation.

In addition, Nobody's arresting officer could not be identified because the badge number does not match with any members of the Toronto Police Service.

Pugash said the remarks made by Blair this week do not hurt his or the force's credibility.

“What this shows is he's prepared to say 'I shouldn't have said that,' and I think for a senior public official to do that is not something that cynical people should see in a cynical way,” said Pugash, adding Blair's words “speak for themselves.”